

Sex and Intimacy After Breast Cancer

Beverly M. Vaughn, M.D.
Clinical Associate Professor Thomas
Jefferson Univ. Hospital
Attending Gynecologist Main Line Health
Care

Can I still be physically intimate?

Absolutely!!

Think Broadly

Intimacy



Intercourse

- “Intimacy is so much more than intercourse.”
- “Intimacy involves being valued as a human being by another human being.”
- From *Intimacy After Cancer A Woman’s Guide* by Dr. Sally Kydd & Dana Rowett

- Breasts
- Breasts
- Breasts

You are more than your body parts



Acknowledge

- Anger
- Grief
- Frustration
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Vulnerability
- Your needs

Communicate!!!!

- Talk with you doctors



Hot potato,
Whose job is it?

Communicate!!!!

- Talk with your partner (OUTSIDE OF THE BEDROOM)

Common concerns

- Diminished desire
- Diminished sensation
- Arousal difficulty
- Orgasm difficulty
- Painful intercourse

Ask yourself

- What was our sex life like prior to the cancer diagnosis?
- What do I want from a relationship?
- What is important to me?

Detractors/Distracters

- Fatigue
- Physical pain
- Side effects of chemo, radiation, maintenance medications
- Other medications and medical conditions
- Body image
- Family stress
- Relationship stress
- Financial stress
- Capability of partner
- Quality of relationship
- Performance pressure
- Fear of disappointing your partner
- Your partner's depression

You Deserve Richness



What if I am single?



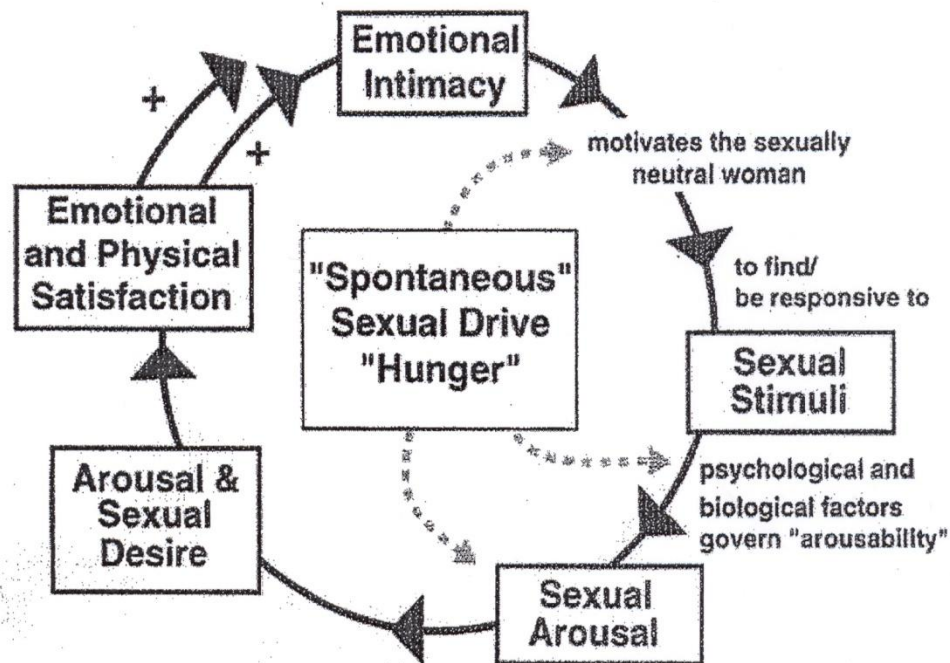
Sexual Response 101



Sexual Response 101

Figure 1

Blended intimacy-based and sexual drive-based cycles



Sexual Response 101

- Desire changes over the course of a relationship and is effected by numerous factors (remember detractors and distracters)

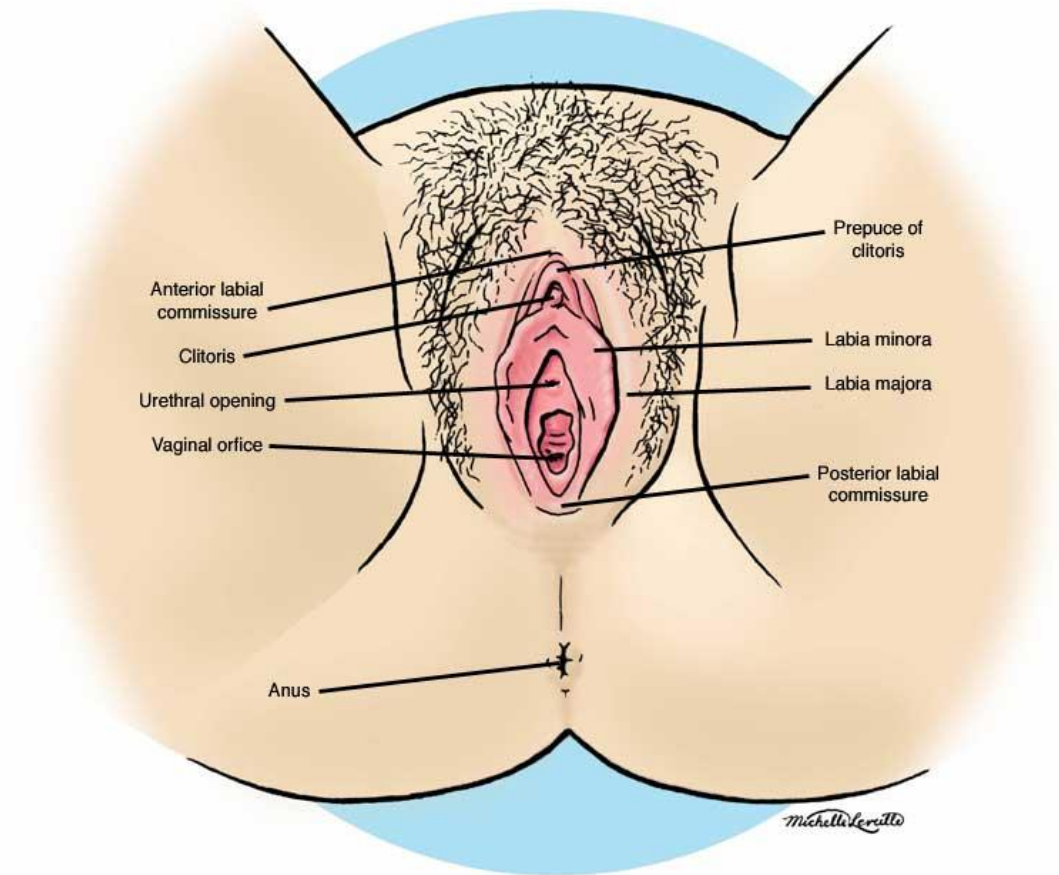
GETTING STARTED

Love and Take Care of Yourself

- De-clutter/de-stress your life
- Eat well: fruits, vegetables, low fat, antioxidants
- Exercise when you can
- Mindfulness
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Use your support systems!!
- Give yourself a break
- Look in the mirror
- Make a list of your good qualities

Have sex with yourself

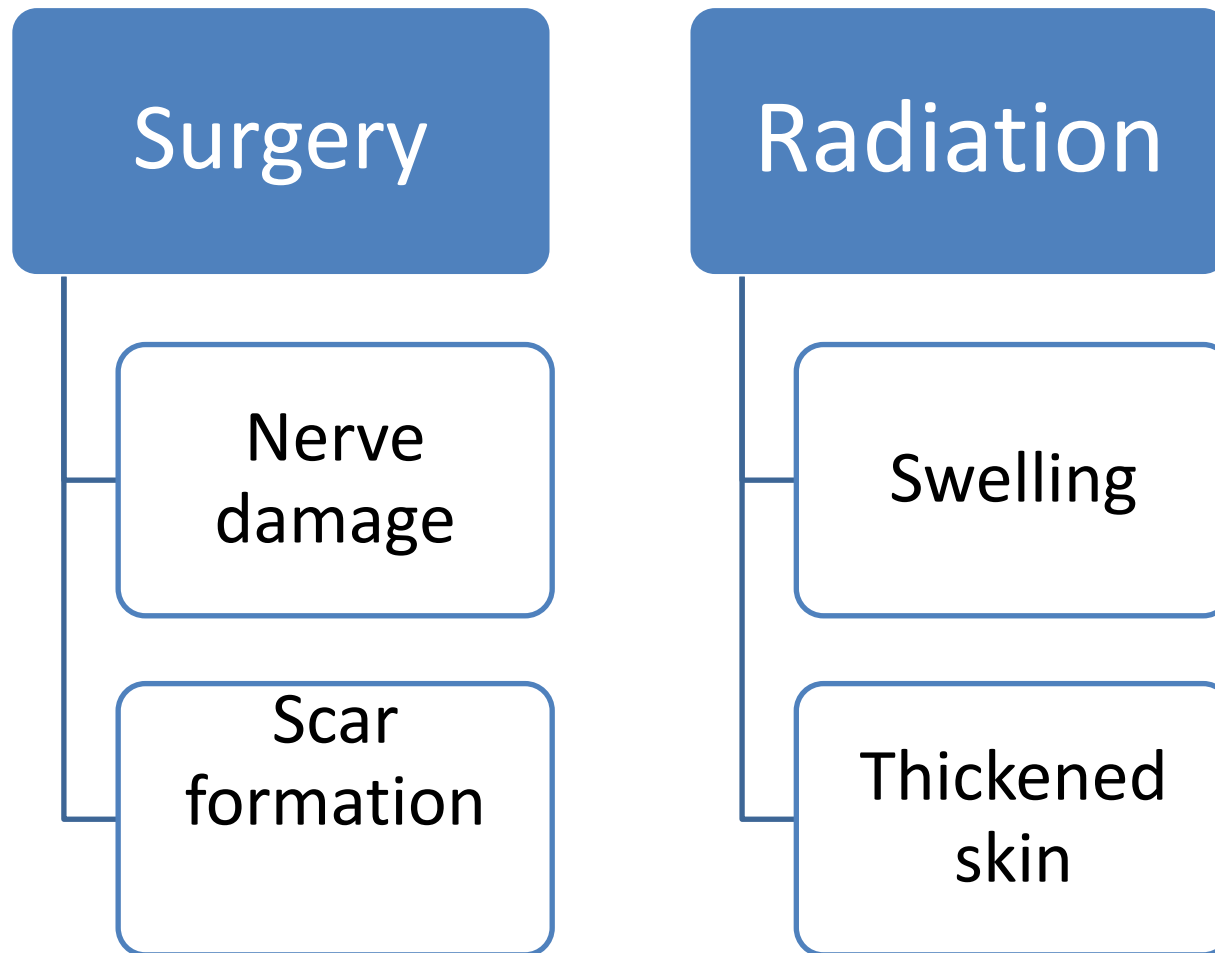
Know your body



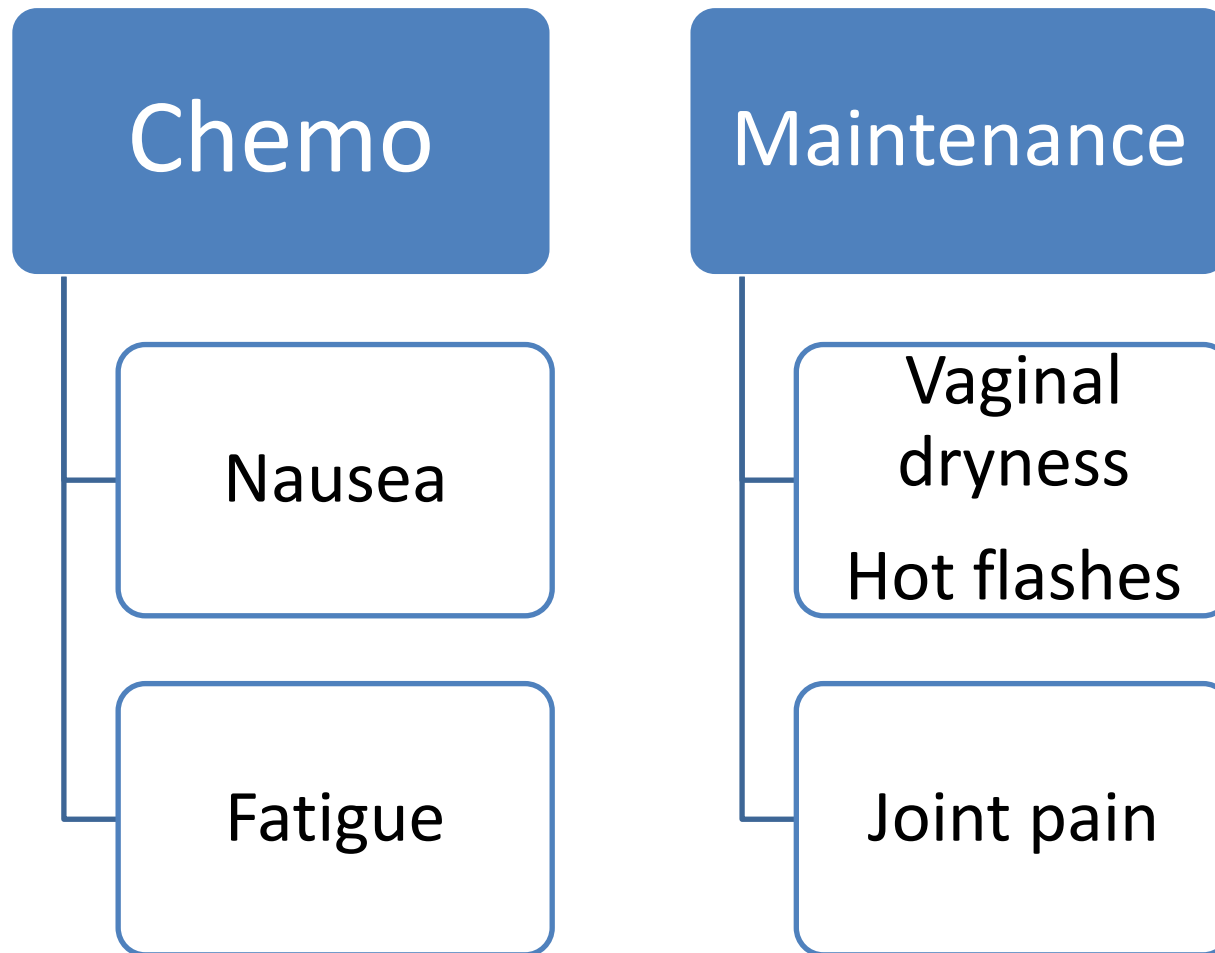
There May Be Decreased Sensitivity

- Nerve damage
- Radiation damage
- Scars
- Decreased blood flow to the genitals

Changes related to treatment



Changes related to treatment



You May Not Be Ready

- Sensate Focus
- Non genital touch
- Intercourse does not have to be the only end point
- “Outercourse”
- Oral sex
- Mutual masturbation

There May Be Dryness

Causes

- Tamoxifen™
- Femara™
- Arimidex™
- Age
- Difficulty with arousal

Solutions

- Moisturizers
- Water based lubricants
- Silicone Based lubricants
- Oil based lubricants
- Vaginal estrogen
- Systemic estrogen ???
- Osphena™ ???
- **TAKE MORE TIME**

Estrogen

- Systemic estrogen
- Vaginal estrogen cream
- -----
- Vagifem™ vaginal tablets
- Estrin™ vaginal ring



If It Hurts



DESIRE AND AROUSAL

Your Brain Is Your Most Valuable Sex Aid



Body Image: Yes You Can be Sexy



Use Fantasy, Use Toys



The Vibrator: Good for Arousal Then and Now



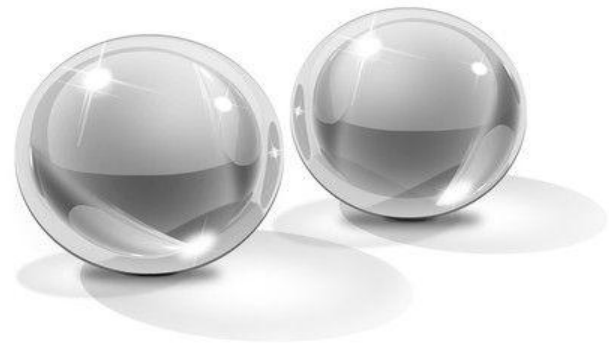
The Modern Variety



What Else Can You Do?

- Kegel's (you may need Ben Wah balls or vaginal weights to help you)
- Change what you do and/or when and where you do it
- Tantra sexual awakening
- Read and/or watch erotica alone or with your partner
- Go to websites to shop with your partner
- Write a "desire diary"
- 365 positions
- Viagra™ ??????
- Testosterone™ ????? (probably not)
- Vaginal Dilators
- Pelvic floor physical therapy
- Sexual health counselor

Vaginal Weights



Vaginal Dilators



Resources: lubricants

Water based lubricant

- Astroglide
- Just Like Me
- K-Y
- Pre-Seed
- Slippery Stuff
- Liquid Silk

Silicone based lubricant

- Astroglide X
- ID Millennium
- K-Y Intrigue
- Pink
- Pjur Eros

Resources: moisturizers

- Replens
- Me Again
- Luvena
- Feminease
- K-Y Silk –E
- Silken Secret

Resources: websites

- www.cancer.org
- www.breastcancer.org
- www.lbbc.org
- www.oncolink.org
- www.menopause.org*
- www.a-womanstouch.com*
- www.middlesexmd.com*
- www.goodvibes.com
- www.justlikeawoman.com*
- www.myplesure.com*
- www.soulsource.com

Resources: Books

- Intimacy After Cancer by Dr Sally Kydd & Dana Rowett
- Woman Cancer Sex by Anne Katz, RN, PhD
- Crazy Sexy Cancer Tips by Kris Carr
- Sex Matters for Women by Sallie Foley, MSW
- Intimacy with Impotence by Ralph & Barbara Alterowitz